

Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 L-03 EB-07 AID-05 IGA-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00

ACDA-05 MC-02 /069 W

----- 024868

P R 030855Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1553

SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

INFO USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

S E C R E T TUNIS 0734

USCINCEUR ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS

SUBJECT: FY 77 MILITARY ASSISTANCE: CHIEF OF MISSION'S
ASSESSMENT

REF: STATE 017013 (DTG 230319Z JAN 76)

1. U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO TUNISIA HAS ALWAYS BEEN RESTRAINED AND LOW KEY IN ACCORDANCE BOTH WITH U.S. GOVERNMENT'S PERCEPTION OF NEEDS AND WITH TRADITIONAL AND CONTINUING TUNISIAN DESIRE THAT MILITARY SHOULD NOT PLAY DOMINANT ROLE IN NATIONAL AFFAIRS. IN ELIMINATING GRANT MATERIEL ASSISTANCE IN FY 75, U.S. GOVERNMENT RECOGNIZED THAT TUNISIAN MILITARY REQUIREMENTS WERE MODEST, TUNISIAN CAPABILITY TO AFFORD THEM HAD INCREASED, AND THAT COMPARED WITH PRESSING NEED FOR U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE ELSEWHERE, TUNISIAN REQUESTS FOR CONTINUED GRANT ASSISTANCE MUST TAKE RELATIVELY LOW PRIORITY. TUNISIAN LEADERSHIP HAS BY AND LARGE ACCEPTED THESE JUDGMENTS.

2. THE OUTBREAK OF CONFLICT BETWEEN MOROCCO AND ALGERIA, AND ESPECIALLY THE RECENT ALIGNMENT OF LIBYA WITH ALGERIA

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FOR PURPOSES OF THAT CONFLICT, HAS IN RECENT MONTHS

HEIGHTENED TUNISIAN CONCERNS ABOUT POSSIBLE MILITARY REPRISALS AGAINST TUNISIA FOR LATTER'S RATHER OUTSPOKEN SUPPORT FOR THE MOROCCAN POSITION. GOT'S REQUEST FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE IN OBTAINING AIR DEFENSE SYSTEMS PREDATES CURRENT TENSION BETWEEN TUNISIA'S NEIGHBORS TO THE WEST BUT THAT TENSION LENDS ADDITIONAL WEIGHT TO RATIONALE BEHIND TCA REQUEST. TUNISIANS IFFER AMONG THEMSELVES REGARDING PROBABILITY OF MILITARY ACTION BY LIBYA OR ALGERIA AGAINST TUNISIA. THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT, HOWEVER, THAT VISIBLE AMERICAN AID IN ACQUIRING ENHANCED DEFENSIVE CAPABILITY SERVES VALUABLE DETERRENT PURPOSES. GOT HAS NOT FINALLY DECIDED HOW OR WHEN TO ACQUIRE AIR DEFENSE PACKAGE AND WILL PROBABLY NOT COMMIT ITSELF TO PURCHASE OF CHAPARRAL SYSTEM WHICH NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION UNLESS PLANNED FMS CREDIT PROPOSED FOR FY 77 (AND BEYOND) IS AVAILABLE.

3. PLANNED CONTINUATION OF \$400,000 PERSONNEL TRAINING GRANT PROGRAM WILL CONTINUE TO YIELD BENEFITS IN TERMS OF PROFESSIONAL BAILITY OF INDIVIDUALS TRAINED, THEIR ATTACHMENT TO AMERICAN CONCEPTS AND INSTITUTIONS, AND WORKING RELATIONS WITH AMERICAN MILITARY. HOWEVER, THE PRICE INCREASES OF TRAINING ARE UNDERMINING THE VALUE OF THIS RELATIVELY MODEST AMOUNT FOR TRAINING. CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO EXAMINING THIS \$400,000 FOR ADEQUACY IN VIEW OF INFLATED PRICES AND IN RELATION TO THE RESULTS DESIRED FROM THIS MONEY. THE CONTINUATION OF A U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN GENERAL IS AN IMPORTANT REINFORCEMENT OF CONTINUING TUNISIAN INTEREST IN CALLS BY SIXTH FLEET UNITS AT TUNISIAN PORTS.

4. IF THE TUNIIANS PROCEED WITH PURCHASE OF CHAPARRAL SYSTEM THROUGH PROPOSED FMS CREDIT PACKAGE, TRAINING IN THIS SYSTEM WILL PRESUMABLY BE INCLUDED IN THE CREDIT PACKAGE AND THEREFORE WILL NOT IMPINGE ON TYPES AND VOLUME OF TRAINING FURNISHED UNDER THE SMALL, ON-GOING MAP GRANT TRAINING PROGRAM.

5. TUNISIAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HAS REQUIRED HEAVY INVESTMENT LEVELS AND IT IS NOW PLANNED TO RAISE THOSE
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LEVELS FURTHER DURING FIVE-YEAR PLAN ENDING 1981. TUNISIAN EARNINGS AND FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES REMAIN SATISFACTORY AND PROSPECTS FOR THEM IN FUTURE SEEM GOOD. WHILE OUR OWN-ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO TUNISIA HAS DROPPED SHARPLY OVER RECENT YEARS, GOT HAS BEEN QUITE SUCCESSFUL IN OBTAINING TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL AID FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS FROM OTHER GOVERNMENTS, EUROPEAN AND ARAB, AS WELL AS FROM INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITU-

TIONS. THIS ASSISTANCE PLUS EXPECTED INCREASE IN NATIONAL SAVINGS SHOULD PERMIT GOT TO ADVANCE ITS NUMBER ONE NATIONAL PRIORITY OF ACHIEVING ECONOMIC TAKE-OFF DURING NEXT PLAN PERIOD. AS RESULT THIS EXPECTED ECONOMIC PROGRESS, SERVICE OF DEBT CREATED BY PROPOSED FMS PACKAGE SHOULD NOT BE A SERIOUS BURDEN ON GOT RESOURCES.

6. THE IMPACT OF THIRD-COUNTRY MILITARY ASSISTANCE IS MORE DIFFICULT TO ASSESS. SMALL MATERIEL PROGRAMS BY FRANCE AND WEST GERMANY WILL PRESUMABLY CONTINUE BUT AT A REDUCED LEVEL FOR WEST GERMANY. THERE MAY BE LIMITED MILITARY AID SUPPLIED BY OTHERS SUCH AS THE REPORTED PRC OFFER OF NAVAL VESSELS TO GOT AND POSSIBLY SMALL ARMS FROM YUGOSLAVIA. FOR REASONS BOTH OF DONOR COUNTRY RELUCTANCE AND OF TUNISIAN DESIRE TO MAINTAIN A MINIMAL MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT, THESE THIRD-COUNTRY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS ARE UNLIKELY TO WORK SIGNIFICANT CHANGES IN EITHER GOT MILITARY CAPABILITY OR ITS FINANCIAL POSITION.

7. THE PROVISION OF PROPOSED FY 77 MILITARY CREDITS TO TUNISIA, AND THE HOPED-FOR DECISION BY BOTH PARTIES TO PERMIT ESTABLISHMENT OF CHAPARRAL SYSTEM IN TUNISIA BY MEANS OF THAT CREDIT, ARE OF MORE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE THAN MILITARY. OUR READINESS TO ASSIST THE TUNISIANS IN FILLING A FELT DEFENSIVE NEED WILL BE TAKEN BY GOT LEADERSHIP, AND BY OTHER NORTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS, AS CONSTITUTING REASSURANCE THAT USG CONTINUES TO VALUE INDEPENDENCE AND INTEGRITY OF TUNISIA.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: MISSION CHIEFS, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS, MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 03 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: RowellE0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976TUNIS00734
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760040-0403
From: TUNIS
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760285/aaaacxhh.tel
Line Count: 144
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION PM
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 17013
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: RowellE0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 FEB 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 FEB 2004 by morefirh>; APPROVED <26 OCT 2004 by RowellE0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FY 77 MILITARY ASSISTANCE: CHIEF OF MISSION'S ASSESSMENT
TAGS: MASS, TS, US
To: STATE DOD
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006